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HEAVEN'S METAL

BATTALION OF SAINTS

Atten-hut! As we prepare for this issue to go to press, I've been listening to the 20th Anniversary Edition of Guardian's First Watch. The song "Saint's Battalion" (remember that one?) struck a chord within, as this issue features (and pays tribute to) musicians who have been deployed in the Lord's army – battling persecution, enduring hardship and honing their hard rock/metal skills – for the better part of two decades or more. Like any good military unit, this "battalion of saints" is versatile – well-disciplined in hard rock (Bride), power metal (Saint), progressive rock (Ajalon), melodic rock/metal (Stryper) and even extreme metal (Mortification). And each has a vital new release in 2009. While some of these "brothers-in-arms" may be called out of service soon, we are thankful to all of them for their years of commitment and sacrifice; and for those soldiering on, we look forward to more great rock and metal!

Oh yeah, one other thing: without a good corps of support services, an army can't succeed. We believe that Heaven's Metal has been at least a part of that support for the folks out on the front lines over the years, and Lord willing, we endeavor to continue to serve in that capacity. However, just like a soldier without ammunition, a drummer without sticks or a band without a gig is "in dire straits," a print magazine without ad sales is "dead in the water." So, in order to keep us "marching on" here ... if you know anyone who wants to advertise in the fanzine (or in HM for that matter) put them into contact with us. [dvanpelt@hmmag.com]

Soldiers, dismissed!

Jonathan "Doc" Swank



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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



By CHRIS BECK & CHRIS GATTO

Stryper – Rocklahoma 2009

Headlining on a Saturday for what was an otherwise weak mainstage lineup (Keel, Kix, Lizzy Borden), Stryper started late due to Jackyl's performance running long. After overcoming what appeared to be some nerves early in the show, Stryper was all business, slamming through over 15 songs with very little talking in between. They played all their hits including "Soldiers Under Command," "Loud and Clear" and "To Hell With the Devil." Though they unfortunately didn't play any songs from *Against the Law*, Stryper did play four songs from their latest album, *Murder By Pride*, including "4 Leaf Clover," which sounds excellent live. Michael can still hit all the notes and the dual guitars sounded fantastic. The crowd was somewhat sparse by the end of the show, but those who stayed clearly enjoyed it. A memorable show, it was great to see Stryper on the big stage once again. (Chris Beck)

Stryper (9/20/09)

Allentown, PA and (9/23/09) Lancaster, PA – Classic Christian pop metal band needing no introduction. This 25th anniversary tour comes on the heels of their excellent new album *Murder by Pride* and showcased the band in much smaller venues than one remembers from the 80's. The big news was that bassist **Tracie Ferie** could not make the tour and original bassist **Tim Gaines** stood in. Even though it was exactly the same set, I actually enjoyed both shows. It was cool to see them play "All For One" from *Against the Law*, but that was the only song. Loved that album. Only one from *In God We Trust*, too ... I think. They dragged at least 3 songs out from *The Yellow and Black Attack*, plus all the standards – "Soldiers...", "To Hell With the Devil," "Honestly" and "Free." They didn't open with "Battle Hymn of the Republic" playing in the dark as an intro like they used to, but "Abyss" as a prelude to "THWTD" made a great encore. Should have written down the setlist, duh! They played probably half of the new album and it went over pretty well – good material. I don't remember if anything was played off of *Reborn*. Their stage attire was yellow and black, but pretty normal looking compared to their outfits and teased out from hair back in the day. Stryper can still put on a rocking show and write great tunes. (Chris Gatto)



Photos: Todd Myra

News bullets

Soundmass is pleased to announce the signing of **Dead Moons Grey** (DMG), the first American band on their roster, for the release of their 3rd album. From the mountains of Tennessee, DMG blend metal, rock, blues and the south together into their own brand of Appalachian metal. Full of power, groove and southern angst, the band's unique sound reflects the life and culture of the region. With regular performances and plans to tour, DMG's stage antics and showmanship will capture the attention of anyone into the likes of Pantera, Ozzy and Danzig. Having already made a ripple in their pond, Dead Moons Grey is forging ahead, so be on the lookout for DMG to drop by the end of the year. Check out their website for some demo songs and videos. [deadmoonsgrey.com]

Fans of power rockers **Alter Bridge** rushed to "beat the street" online this week and made *Live in Amsterdam*, the band's first-ever live DVD – and the first live concert DVD from DC3 Music Group – hit #1 in the top 100 on the "music Rock & Roll charts" on Amazon.com. Available now.

Retroactive Records and **Liberty N' Justice** finally can reveal the final track listing for LNJ's new album *Light It Up!* After months and months of revealing guest artists, the last song to be announced, "Wrestling With God," will feature Trixter members Pete Loran and Steve Brown with a guest guitar solo by Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal of Guns N' Roses! The song once again was co-written by LNJ founder **Justin Murr** and Steve Brown (who also produced the track). The disk was also produced by Vic Rivera, Mike Layne, CJ Snare (who also pre-mastered the disk), and Stephen Chesney. The album will be mastered by J. Powell at Steinhaus Mastering (who also mastered the latest Bride CD, Mainline Riders, Saint and who remastered Guardian's *First Watch*). Matt Hunt of Retroactive Records stated, "I've been a life-long fan of hard rock and this is one of the best albums I have ever heard!" The album has a January 19, 2010 planned release date. See libertynjustice.net for full track and artist listings.

Mortification's *Twenty Years In The Underground* double CD will be released by European Major Nuclear Blast Records February 26th. For more information on Mortification please visit roweproductions.com.

Prosthetic Records is proud to announce the signing of **Mantric** to the label for a worldwide, multi-album deal. Formed in 2007 in Oslo, Norway from the ashes of metal pioneers **Extol**, Mantric takes the visionary songwriting approach of its founding members to new, epic heights. Fusing a unique, distinctly Scandinavian take on rich, challenging metal and punk with a powerful progressive edge, Mantric recorded their upcoming debut in Norway with studio guru Tue Madsen (Dark Tranquillity, The Haunted) handling mixing and mastering duties. Prosthetic Records quickly recognized that something rather special was developing and is now very happy to have Mantric as part of their diverse roster. The as yet untitled debut album is scheduled for worldwide release in late February 2010. A special preview track, "Spear Of Heaven," from this record is now online at the official Myspace page. [myspace.com/mantriciofficial]

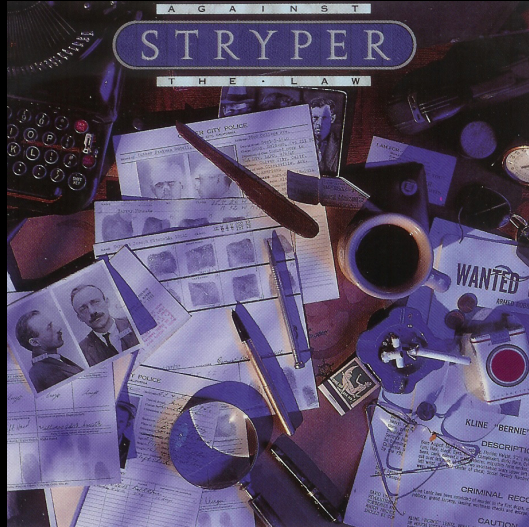


AGAINST THE LAW:

Stryper's Best Ever

Why is *Against the Law* Stryper's best album? There isn't a single bad song on the album. It includes their best ballad, "Lady," and arguably their greatest song ever, "All For One." The band's spiritual struggles during this time are well documented, but that doesn't keep the lyrics from being positive and impactful. Let's not forget that rock 'n' roll was founded on rebellion, it may actually be their personal battles that gave *ATL* its edge. Complete with production that is perfect and perfectly raw, this album will "Rock the Hell Out of You" and is easily my favorite Stryper album of all time.

—Chris Beck



This album is Stryper's greatest metallic assault. Guitar crunchin' heavy metal rock n roll! *ATL* has powerful production, sensational guitar-driven anthems with the absence of formulaic drivel. The whole band delivers and Mike provides the best vocal performance in Stryper's history. The album has depth lyrically and avoids the clichés that have haunted some of their past albums. Made to be played at ear-splitting volume with no filler, this album dominates all others.

—Keven Crothers

It's all about the attitude. If you believe what you read in magazines, by the end of the 80's the God Squad had had enough of public scrutiny from the Church and heavy metal culture alike and their 1990 album *ATL* reflected the new "Stop judging us – we no longer care what you think!" motto. Rebellion and rock music have always fit hand in hand. The new attitude seeped into everything about the band. Stryper's image got rougher. Gone were the bee suits and clean shaven faces. In with darker clothing, beards, and the jail cell motif. Even the album name screamed rebellion. The music rocked that much harder. Same band, but they went from tame to bull-in-a-china-shop in one album. Gone were all the ballads, except for "Lady," which was one of their classics. They took some heat from some who cried "secular," but if you read the lyrics, they never strayed from the Way – the songs were just written a little less "heart on sleeve." *ATL* was a slap in the face to the pharisees of the day, and I loved every minute of it.

—Chris Gatto

Prior to *ATL*, Stryper may have been criticized for being too soft, but all images of the glam metal band were decimated with this release. These songs – raw, passionate, diverse, consistent and faithful – were the most credible collection of heartfelt emotion these guys ever threw down. Even in 2009 these songs are relevant and vital. This remains one of my all-time favorite melodic metal releases.

—Jonathan Swank

Against The Law was produced by a guy named Tom Werman. This guy produced the classic rock hit *Cat Scratch Fever* by Ted Nugent, so he knows something about hook-filled and riff-driven rock. There are better songs in the Stryper catalog on other albums, and I will probably choose *To Hell With The Devil* over this album in *HM Mag's* upcoming 25th anniversary issue due to its historical significance, but speaking in terms of a full-length album (above individual songs), this album had a swagger, a consistency of great hooks, an intense aggressiveness and that stellar production (not too high, not too polished) that easily ranks it as Stryper's best album. It's a shame that a perfect storm of controversy and a low amount of promotion and marketing hindered *Against The Law*... as this album deserved much better.

—Doug Van Pelt

The new *Ajalon* CD is now available from ProgRock Records. *This Good Place* marks a huge step forward for Ajalon. This is a CD that will feature some great musical moments as well as stellar performances from both the band and some awesome guest players such as Paul Bielatowicz and Fred Schendal to name just a couple. Listeners will find this a much more allegorical album lyrically than the first two releases. The thematic concept on this CD addresses the depravity and selfishness of the human condition and how it has led to the downfall of our character. But the story is undergirded with the concept that it is never too late to turn from those ways to find something greater within ourselves that ultimately leads us to *This Good Place*! The CD will feature 7 tracks with a running time of approximately 60 minutes. There is one instrumental track on the CD and one epic song about 20 minutes in length. Much of the album features brand new material developed over the last three years. There are also a few previously unreleased classic Ajalon songs, which have been reworked and newly recorded, mixed in as well. This is a very different sounding album that finds its place in the current mainstream of progressive rock music while maintaining some of that trademark Ajalon sound. [myspace.com/ajalonband]

Retroactive Records will be reissuing the legendary debut release by Christian metal powerhouse **Guardian**. *First Watch: 20th Anniversary Edition* will offer 14 amazing tracks of classic metal that comes in a full color, four panel digipak (with a tray), properly remastered by J. Steinhaus for a maximum metal auditory experience. It will feature exclusive liner notes by **David Bach** (bass), stunning enhanced (way better!) original artwork by the amazing **Rex Zachary**, and includes the original two bonus track exclusive to the original CD release, plus the two **Elefante**-released bonus tracks from the amazing and out-of-print 1987 *California Metal* CD compilation that preceded the release of *First Watch* in 1989!

Detroit prog rockers **Tiles** had this update to report: "The writing process is in full swing. We've got sketches of about 15 songs in various stages of completion, and have even resurrected the "Destiny Undelivered" song cycle from the *Window Dressing* era vaults. We'll be periodically auditioning new tunes as we continue to play throughout the Detroit area. Also being tossed around is the possibility of a limited edition 15th anniversary live CD. Yes, the international release of our debut CD will turn 15 in 2010, so we figured we should do 'something.' We've never released a proper live recording and feel that maybe it's the right kind of commemoration." [tiles-music.com]



Namia's new album *Course Of A Generation* was released on October 13th on Nightmare Records. The CD includes the US bonus track "Master of Lies." The album will also be released on Japanese label Sound Holic in Japan on Oct 28th. The Japanese release will include bonus material as well. [myspace.com/namiaofficial]

Audiovision is almost finished with the recording of their brand new album *Focus*. Look for a release in February/March 2010. [myspace.com/audiovisionsweden]

Swedish record label Rivel Records has now changed their name to Christian Music Sweden. [rivelrecords.com]

Metal Sanctuary – the Metal Church of Sweden – held a Metal Prayer Day on the 19th of September in Kumla, Sweden. Several of the leading persons in the Christian metal scene lead the intense and powerful prayer. The day also contained lots of praise and worship in real heavy metal style at full volume. In the evening the day ended with gigs with Narnia, **Shadows of Paragon** and **Tribute to the Heroes**. [metalsanctuary.se]

METAL TRACKS

Page eight



CAGED UP FOR OH, SO LONG

Mr. Van Pelt, I would really like to commend you! I have been mostly reading HM since the early 90's. I recently discovered a band called Cage, although I have not listened to them yet. I found the album cover for *Hell Destroyer* and used it as a background for my computer. However, when I changed my background I forgot about Cage and just today rediscovered them. I do not listen to any music that is not God inspired, and upon checking out to see if Cage were a Christian band I found an article online from your magazine that sold me that they were God-fearing and thus I can now check them out and hopefully enjoy their music as I love metal. Thanks again for your magazine.

—Joseph L. Parker, via internet

Doug – Glad we could help with your metal diet.

GOUGING OUR NEIGHBORS

I've been a long time reader of Heaven's Metal/HM magazine over the years... I would like to subscribe to the Heaven's Metal fanzine publication that is released bi-monthly, but find the added "Foreign" charge a real unnecessary gouge for a Canadian customer. I live just outside of Toronto, Canada. In my experience the shipping rate is barely any higher than it would be to send a magazine to Detroit, MI or Buffalo, NY. I believe it's unfair and totally unnecessary to add \$11.78 for shipping to Toronto. That's \$1.79 more than the actual subscription itself! If I lived in Africa or some other

far continent, I would agree with a charge closer to that, but certainly not when we are neighbours on the same continent. I don't think someone has put enough thought into the shipping rates. I see that there is a spot for a gift certificate or discount coupon when ordering a subscription. May I respectfully ask that a more reasonable shipping rate be applied for a Toronto, Canada customer to Heaven's Metal fanzine? If the current added shipping charge is reduced substantially, I will gladly subscribe. If no discount can be provided, I simply can't justify paying an added \$11.78 for shipping. An added discouragement is that it will always cost even more because of the exchange rate difference between the weaker Canadian dollar compared to the US greenback. To give you an idea, \$21.77 US costs \$23.38 CND today. \$9.99 US costs 10.73 CND today. Let me know what you can do... Thanks,

—Andrew Rudd, Barrie, Ontario, Canada

Doug – Actually, the rates we are charged for Canada are the same as for all other countries. It is shipped via QVIL. It all has to do with bulk mailing. We have looked for better rates and this is the best we can do at this time. We do not mail these from our office. They are mailed directly from the printer. I can understand your frustration. We really don't make money on the fanzines at all. We do it for the return to our roots and the avid lovers of metal. We will re-check shipping options when we can and let you know if we can make a change. Thanks for your input.

[nothin' but] News bullets

Ultrium Records are proud to announce the release of a limited 12" picture-disc edition of the latest **Stryper** album *Murder By Pride* for the European market. A deal was inked with the Italian label Frontiers Records and the release date is set to December 4th. The LP will be strictly limited to 500 copies, and comes with a full color poster inlay.

Sacred Warrior is set to play a concert on December 4th at the Hard Rock Café, San Juan. Talk of new Sacred Warrior material has been floating around for years; let's hope this is a sign of things to come. [myspace.com/sacredwarrior777]

Roxx Productions has a new website. "Check it out this month as we are proud to not only offer you some brand new releases and new episodes of *Strictly Stryper*, but we are also launching our brand new website! Muchas gracias to the one and only JBM Design and Brian Marshall for putting together another beautiful website!" Check out the website to see updates on new releases by **Michael Phillips**, **Voice of Glass**, **Ultimatum** and **Deliverance**.

Ultimatum's *Puppet of Destruction* (reissue) was released October, 13th on Roxx. The remastered disc came out phenomenal thanks to longtime Ultimatum collaborator Sid Ysidro being at the soundboard. The combination has been working well for both parties and continues on with this very special Limited Edition re-release. If you think you have heard this CD before ... guess again! This special release comes complete with new artwork, exclusive liner notes and tons of live photos. But not only do you get the remastered CD, you also get 3 added bonus tracks including the Testament cover, "Sins of Omission," an early demo version of the track "Never" and a re-recorded version of the track "Mortal Stomp."

Atlantic recording group **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** released its hugely anticipated new album *Night Castle* in stores and all digital retailers on October 27th. Years in the making, *Night Castle* is without question TSO's most ambitious and adventurous work to date. Founder **Paul O'Neill** and crew have created 26 songs that run the gamut from hard rock to classical, taking the listener on a journey through different points of history. *Night Castle* details the triumphs and follies of man, but is ultimately an epic story of transformation and love. The two-CD set was released at a special low price, and will include a unique 68-page booklet, featuring story, lyrics and full-color illustrations by legendary artist Greg Hildebrandt.

X-Sinner has been asked to headline the Elements Of Rock Fest in Uster Switzerland April 24th 2010. The band will be performing an approximate 80 minute set comprised of material from each of the bands albums with a large dose from their new album *World Covered In Blood* and promises to be a great show.

Axehead Inc will be re-recording their EP from 2005 this winter and adding 2 new songs. They'll be playing shows in spring of 2010. Watch myspace.com/axeheadinc for details.

Day Of Fire's forthcoming release, *Losing All*, features 13 ambitious, high energy rock songs. Set for release on January 26, it's a powerful hard-rock record that showcases the growth of band professionally and personally. Day Of Fire is vocalist **Josh Brown**, guitarist **Joe Pangallo**, his brother **Chris Pangallo** on bass, and drummer **Zach Simms**.

For more news, visit myspace.com/heavensmetalmagazine



Photo: Todd Myra



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**WELCOME TO THE
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BY CHRIS GATTO

ONE OF THE PIONEERING CHRISTIAN METAL BANDS OF THE EARLY '80s, SAINT LED THE SHIFT AWAY FROM POP METAL TO THE DARKER POWER METAL OF THE JUDAS PRIEST VEIN WITH THEIR APTLY-TITLED "APOCALYPTIC METAL." THEY PUT OUT THEIR DEBUT *WARRIORS OF THE SON* INDEPENDENTLY AND THEN RELEASED *TIME'S END* AND *TOO LATE FOR LIVING* ON THE DEFUNCT PURE METAL LABEL BEFORE FADING INTO OBSCURITY AT THE END OF THE '80s. THANKFULLY, WITH THE NEW MILLENNIUM AND METAL ON THE RISE AGAIN, SAINT DUSTED OFF THEIR INSTRUMENTS AND HAS BEEN IN A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY EVER SINCE. WE CAUGHT UP WITH BASSIST AND MAIN MAN RICH LYNCH TO TALK ABOUT THE UPCOMING SAINT RELEASE *HELL BLADE*.

CG: What was your vision for Saint when you restarted the band in 2003? Were they the same reasons for starting the band originally, or had something changed?

RL: No change, I've always felt an urgency to put out the message that the end is near. When I started this journey, it's what I wanted to warn people about. At that time most bands sang about happy thoughts and Jesus' love and that's all good with me, but I still feel there's a need to hear the whole truth. Clearly we're moving at a very rapid pace toward time's end and if I have my way everyone will know.

Please tell us about the process of making your new album, *Hell Blade*. Are you satisfied with the result, or would you change aspects of it?

Ya know, when you have a process that works ... why change it, right??? Well, I broke a few of my own rules with this production and it came back to bite me. I've lived and learned and made the corrections. I believe this CD is going to be one of our best. I spent an unimaginable amount of time on this, but am feeling the rewards of accomplishment already. However, I don't think anyone finishes a project and wouldn't like to change a thing or two.

What can fans anticipate with this album?

Well first the bad news: I'm not singing any of the songs; and the good news is that Josh is doing them all. The themes are very Saint-like in that we cover everything from current events to of course the apocalyptic themes that are the staple of any Saint CD. We have a different drum style as we brought Bill Brost on board, and with the departure of Dee Harrington (he's working on a solo project) Jerry Johnson had to do all the lead work for the project. Some of the work he did will have a symphony-like sound, while at the same time blazing fast finger work. Jerry gets an A on this project.

That kind of leads me into another question. From a fan's perspective, the signature Saint sound rests largely on the distinctive vocals of Josh Kramer, and his absence from a project seems to doom it to failure. I'm overdramatizing, I'm sure, but I'm alluding to the first attempted Saint reunion in 1999 and *Crime Scene Earth*. Is that the kind of reason that you guys are rerecording *Crime Scene Earth* and when can we expect to see that available?

It is true that Josh is an extremely important part of the band and unless he chooses to move on, I see no reason to bring any one else in. But because I don't do this for the money and my motivation is to warn of things to come, I would most likely continue no matter what. Josh is an awesome singer and performer and I think that most will enjoy his effort on this new CD. As far as its release date, I think by Dec or Jan. My understanding is Retroactive wants to release *CSE* and *Hell Blade* at the same time, but that's totally up to Matt Hunt.

Saint has recorded independently of a record contract since the Pure Metal days, but you are currently working with Retroactive. I have a couple questions related to that. In the current economic climate, is it wiser, or more profitable for a band to put out their own product? Is it difficult to get distribution that way? And what changed to make you work with a record label again? Does that open more doors for you?

To your first question: Yes, but no! You will make more money per disc by double or more if you can sell your own, but record companies are in business to make money and therefore it would make sense that they'll do all they can to promote and sell your product. Most of us don't have the time or the connections to get distribution deals and so selling product on your web site and a few online stores become the medium for sales and distribution. Sure, I had most of the online stores covered, but Retro is

"Clearly we're moving at a very rapid pace toward time's end and if I have my way everyone will know."

continually working on in-store sales and in-store MP3 hosting. They also take care of promo distribution and will make sure that radio play is happening and again have the connections to make it happen. I think I just answered both questions...

If I may dip into your past history, I'd like to bring up the album cover for *Time's End*. It was certainly your best cover art, but you took a lot of heat for it (even though it was biblical). Knowing that now, would you put out the same cover all over again, or put out a safe cover to keep the album in Christian bookstores? Is it metal bands' duty to stay true to their values by putting out art that is on the edge? You know, it's so funny when people bring up the *Time's End* artwork. I never liked it! I mean, it was a masterpiece of art and Jeff Spencer did an awesome job of the beast and its description, but I kicked and complained the whole way. The art I had made, which did become the *Time's End* T-shirt, was more in the vein I wanted. A burning city with rats running around and this dude we lovingly called "Manhole Mike" after Mike Lowery, that's what I was looking for. It wasn't an issue to me if the stores hid the LP behind the counter or not, I still don't care. (I don't want to

scare grandma!) I just want a good representation of what we're trying to say with the project.

What is your favorite live Saint show and will Saint ever tour again? What's the future hold for the band?

1985 opening for REZ, this was our first real show. It was in Portland, OR and there were about 1500 people – okay 1000 – anyway, we started the show with "Warriors of the Son" and then went straight into "Legions of the Dead," and when we hit that last note of the song the crowd was deafening. I was in a state of shock. Our concession table sold out of everything and Glenn Kaiser said we took all the sales (Those guys were so awesome to play with I think we played with them 3 or 4 times after that) and I knew God opened the door. I may release the video someday. As for touring, we want to play some shows and fests, but no talk of a tour. We're looking at doing some videos and a full length DVD after we're done with *Hell Blade*, but by the time this interview comes out Iran may be glass and the world on fire. Come quickly Lord Jesus!

Heavy metal has been around more than 40 years now, and yet the classic, traditional metal that

you play is still in fashion today. Do you have any comments on the current musical climate or shifts over the years?

I read this book a couple months ago called *The Shack*. It's fiction, but it changed my way of thinking in many ways. It let me see how God uses all things to His glory, even some of the bad stuff. There's a part in the book where the father figure is humming a song the listener never heard before and when asked, the father figure replied, "This song hasn't been written yet." I highly recommend this book.

Anything else you want to add?

We are going through times like I've never seen and I feel that things will get worse. I so much want for everyone to pay attention to world events and stay focused on God's call on our lives. We have a responsibility to help shape our world and our country. We need to apply common sense to our decisions and let our world leaders know we're watching. "We need to say what we mean and mean what we say."

HEAVEN'S
METAL



BRIDE

Drops "The Bomb"

BY JONATHAN SWANK

TO BE QUITE FRANK, I'VE BEEN IN A BRIDE VACUUM FOR THE PAST 3 YEARS. UNTIL I DROPPED *TSAR BOMBA* – THE BAND'S LATEST RELEASE – INTO MY CD PLAYER I HADN'T HEARD ONE SONG OR SOUND BITE FROM THIS VETERAN BAND'S LATEST ENDEAVOR. TURNS OUT, THIS RARE "VIRGIN EARS" EXPERIENCE WAS VERY SATISFYING – I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE QUALITY AND THE DIVERSITY OF THE SONGS. IN FACT, I WAS SURPRISED ENOUGH THAT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FINAL SONG ON THE CD I CALLED TROY THOMPSON, BOTH TO CONGRATULATE HIM AND TO CLARIFY A FEW THINGS.

JS: Troy, tell us a bit about the new release and how it compares and differs from some of your more recent releases.

TT: I really don't think that *Tsar Bomba* differs from our other releases in that we write the music we feel at the time and don't try to follow any trends or past projects. In saying that, I believe that this is our best recording in a long while. Dale and I basically wrote an entire album and worked with some drummers to fine tune the songs and then scrapped the whole thing. The music we scrapped seemed contrived. When we started writing again, we really took our time and did not accept any music that would be considered "filler" tracks. I truly enjoy every note in every song on *Tsar Bomba*. [Troy further said that typically, after a Bride CD is released, he may not listen to it for a year because he is worn out with the songs, but with this new release he has continued to enjoy them with repeated play.]

***Tsar Bomba* is touted as your last Bride release. We've heard this before. Is this truly the end of Bride, and if so, why?**

Since it took us 3 years to get this project together, I am not sure if we have the time or the energy to devote to further projects. To really do an album right, it takes an enormous amount of time and dedication. That means time away from family and home projects. And this is truly a labor of love, because no one in Bride is getting rich off our projects.

When you've been writing music as long as you have – over 20 years now – how do you come up with new ideas and ways to keep things sounding fresh? Where have you found your inspiration musically?

I know that Dale writes lyrics all the time and stores them away. I have a season when I can write music. If I try to force the writing process, it may sound OK, but I don't enjoy it and it seems a bit artificial. Dale and I talked about doing some heavy industrial songs, so I tried writing that style. It just didn't sound believable to me. It is kind of hard to explain, but I know when I need to write. Inspiration comes when I feel like writing and turn on the amp, the drum machine and the recorder. Sometimes after recording a riff, I listen back and think, "Did I really write that?" It is like the music comes out of your fingers and you can't control it.

You guys have experimented with many different rock sounds/styles over the span of your musical career and you've always done your own thing, regardless of trends. But which of those releases do you listen to now and say, "Yeah, that's great!" Which, if any, do you look back and say, "Wow, what were we thinking?"

During the process of writing and recording songs in the past, everything seems great. Once you start mixing in the studio, a song can take on a life of its own. Many times, I have liked our rehearsal version of a song better than the studio version. It is difficult to see that at the time, though. It usually takes several months before you can reflect properly. Even though I like *Fist Full of Bees*, it was probably the project that once reflected upon, was my biggest disappointment.

We just recently published an "all Brazil metal" issue. I am amazed at the growth and diversity in the scene there and Bride has a huge following there. Why have you guys been so well received there for years? What is it about that scene that energizes you?



We started going to Brazil back in the early 90s. We got to play large festivals of up to 100,000 people. When you get that kind of exposure multiple times, it is difficult not to get a following. The Brazilian crowds love high energy rock n roll. They are the best group as a whole to play for because of their intensity.

Over the course of a long career there are many opportunities for success and failure. Looking back, what do you see as one of Bride's biggest successes/impacts and what do you see as one of the band's biggest failures or mistakes.

I think that spending a lot of time and effort in Brazil has been our biggest success. During and after performance there Dale would get the opportunity to share Christ and salvation with the audiences. Based on our response there and after returning to the States we have had a major impact on many lives. As for failures or mistakes, it is difficult to see how the future would have changed by making a different decision. I do wonder what would have happened if we would have stayed at Star Song instead of departing. Later, they were sold to EMI and they may have had the capital to really help put us in the mainstream. Who knows? I have to believe that our decisions at the time were a result of prayer and obedience to God.

What is one of your most memorable Bride experiences? Any moments you'd like to forget?

There are too many memorable moments to be printed in this interview. To note a couple would be playing for hundreds of thousands of people throughout Brazil and touring with Stryper some 19 years ago. As for moments I would like to forget, there are a few of those too. I once accidentally put diesel fuel in our van

because the diesel nozzle was mixed in with the gas nozzles. It was no fun siphoning the diesel fuel back out. All in all, we have had a very blessed ride.

As a veteran in the scene who has seen and heard a lot, in what ways has your faith sustained you through the difficult times, and in what ways have you struggled and been challenged in that regard?

I know it has been said too often, but you have to put your faith in God and not in man, promoters, record companies, bands, etc. The business end of playing music is a real drag. Having to deal with people who lie or break promises is never fun. In the music business, when you find some genuine people who act rationally over time, you have found gold. Neither Dale nor I have ever struggled with our belief in Christ being the Savior of the world. We have continually preached Christ and Him crucified from day one, which happens to be over 25 years ago. I have seen many critics of Bride come and go in their faith and we are still here. I credit much of our perseverance to my parents who did all they could to make sure we were raised properly.

I understand you guys had a car accident awhile back. Were there any repercussions from that in terms of injuries or your ability to play?

The only repercussion was that I had to restore my 1968 convertible Mustang again. It was my first car and I still have it. That is the third time that Dale and I have been in an accident in that car. Needless to say, we are never riding in it together again.

As a physician, I see a lot of physical suffering, pain, emotional turmoil, etc. From your perspective as a musician, in what ways does rock/metal (whether

as art or just as a release of emotion) help in healing sickness?

I think that music can heal the soul and mind to some degree. Words, whether they come from books, poems or songs can have an impact on our lives. Positive thinking and faith can help keep you healthy. I think that music can also be a getaway for some people. Throughout our time as a band, we have received thousands of letters and email from fans telling us how our music helped get them through a difficult time in their lives.

And as a follow-up to that question, in what ways is rock/metal uniquely suited for Christians/believers to use as a tool to aid in healing spiritual sickness?

Music can be a mood changer for many people. It can help some relax and be delivered from stress. Music is used to praise God. In the end, I feel it is prayer that is most effective in physical/spiritual healing.

Finally, Troy, what is the one question that you've always wanted to be asked in an interview that you were never asked?

I have pondered this question and can't come up with anything. I believe that I have been asked the full gamut of questions throughout my interviewing career. There is one thing I would like to say, though. I count myself among the most fortunate to have been able to write, record and perform music with Bride. Getting to travel the world, meet people and help to bring about change in their lives has been most rewarding.

HEAVENS
MUSIC



Photo: Man In The Mountain [maninthemountain.com]

AJALON

This Good Band

BY MARK BLAIR GLUNT

IT WAS A WARM JUNE DAY 2005 WHEN I MET THE MEMBERS OF AJALON FOR THE FIRST TIME AT SILENT PLANET FEST. THEY WERE AN EXTRAORDINARY LIVE BAND, COMBINING SOME OF THE SWEETEST POP MELODIES WITH INTRICATE PROG SENSIBILITIES. IT HAPPENED TO BE THE FIRST TIME THEY PLAYED A CONCERT TOGETHER IN EIGHT YEARS. YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN IT. WITH A NEW RECORDING, *THIS GOOD PLACE* (OUT NOW), WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO CHECK IN WITH ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF CHRISTIAN PROG ROCK.

MBG: Ajalon has been a band for 15 years; tell us how you guys started working together.

Randy George: Well it started when Wil came to a rehearsal I was having with a singer that I was working with. She had been in contact with him previously and after a time reconnected with him. She invited him along to hear us and he really wanted to be involved. That was in 1993. Later, after that band dissolved, Wil and I began working on some of his songs and that became *Ajalon*. Later, Dan Lile moved to Seattle to play drums for us. Over the course of the next year we recorded our first CD which was released by Rick Wakeman on his indie label Hope Records.

Tell us what has kept you guys working together for so long.

Wil Henderson: First, dedication to serve God through our music; second, mutual respect; third, enjoying one another's individual friendship. From the outset, we have each maintained a great deal of respect for one another. Right from the start, we determined to avoid the pursuit of commercial viability in favor of creating the music that God put in our hearts. We initially experienced a great deal of what some artists call 'creative tension.' By whatever name, it was a tricky beast to tame, and had it not been overcome by our learning to understand one another (and the Lord's intervention a few times) it would have been the end of Ajalon long ago. Today, I count Randy and Dan as my two closest friends, who also happen to be by far the finest musicians with whom I have ever had the privilege of working.

Dan, you moved from Denver, Colorado to Seattle, WA to join Ajalon. What

motivated that move and what were your first impressions of Ajalon?

Dan Lile: I was motivated by a calling from the Lord. That is as simple as I can put it. Randy and I have been best friends since I was about 18 years old. He told me about his group Ajalon and how they were a Christian progressive band. I never heard of one of those before, so was intrigued. It is hard to explain but when the Spirit calls you, it is like a magnet drawing you toward its source. I believe my first impression of Ajalon was that here were 2 great guys who had a genuine desire to do something substantial in life using music as the medium. We hold a very close bond between us as friends and brothers.

How did you come up with the name Ajalon?

Wil: Randy had created an instrumental piece, prior to our meeting, called "Moon Over Ajalon." The scriptural basis for the song was precisely the message that we wanted our band to put out – God's grace in the midst of judgment. I suggested to Randy that we name our band "Ajalon." He agreed, and so it goes.

What does the band's name mean?

Randy: Without going into a Bible study on it ... it means "valley of the hart" in the Hebrew ... or "deer valley." If you look at Joshua 10:12 we have paraphrased it down to "grace in the midst of the fire."

I like to think of Ajalon's music as compositions, rather than traditional songwriting. The band has a way of creating complex music, yet there

“This deeper understanding of the brokenness of humanity has simply made me more aware of how much I hate what this corrupt world does to God’s most cherished creation. And it makes me all the more determined to present that danger – and God’s offer of grace and peace through Jesus Christ – in the clearest terms possible.”

always seems to be a nice hook and memorable melodies. What inspires your creative process?

Wil: God typically drops an idea into the noggin of one of the members. Whoever happens to be the recipient can vary – God is funny like that. I have learned to carry a pad and paper with me wherever I go. Most of the lyrics on our first two albums came to me in less than thirty minutes from first word to finished draft. Talk about “being instant in and out of season!”

Randy: I tend to write a lot of music rather than songs where Wil tends to write songs rather than a lot of music. So we compliment each other that way. I work a lot off of Wil’s ideas but musically all my influences filter in. I think that a song should be accessible regardless of complexity or length. I like poppy sounding songs. It’s what I tend to write. But then I flesh out the ideas to be more of a prog style. Wil has written the music to many songs as well but usually with lyrics in place. I have only written a couple of songs complete with lyrics. Wil is by far the best songwriter I have ever worked with and I have worked with a few.

Wil, since you have become a trauma nurse and have been working in an ER, do you feel that this has had an impact on your writing?

Wil: I find that my lyrics have taken on a kind of starkness or edginess when I describe conditions or situations that tend to damage the human spirit. Where perhaps I would use more veiled terms to create a picture of, for example, loneliness or selfishness, I now create a much darker picture of these things. This is not to say that I have somehow developed a sense of cynicism or futility – not at all! I simply see the darkness much more clearly now, after being exposed to it to a much greater depth through the human suffering with which I contend daily. This deeper understanding of the brokenness of humanity has simply made me more aware of how much I hate what this corrupt world does to God’s most cherished creation. And it makes me all the more determined to present that danger – and God’s offer of grace and peace through Jesus Christ – in the clearest terms possible.

You have been involved with the releases of the CPR (Christian Progressive Rock) CD compilations. Tell us a little about this.

Randy: I started producing these in 2004 with my friend and colleague Gene Crout from Denver. We both felt that CPR in general needed to have a professional looking and sounding presence in the world. Until then it had never had a place. Nobody had ever done it aside from Rick Wakeman or Kerry Livgren within their own solo efforts. But that was not really quite the same thing since both were already established artists. We found many hungry artists that felt the same passion to play progressive music yet under gird their Christian faith within that context. So basically we gave it a face and a name. I think the compilations have served two purposes. One is to introduce progressive stylings into the Christian music, and the other was to introduce Christian themes into the progressive realm. But the CD’s were intended to serve mainly as a tool for these bands to cross promote to each one’s audience.

Tell us about the upcoming Ajalon release.

Wil: The recurring theme of Ajalon’s music has been the coming of man to the end of himself and then making the choice to receive God’s free gift of grace. That in itself is the overarching theme of God’s own story for us as written in His word. Ajalon’s upcoming release tells this story in a way perhaps never heard before – more starkly, more biting, and certainly with a sharper edge than anything Ajalon has previously done. The album also represents a pivotal moment in the history of Ajalon – a “clearing the docket” of sorts. Two guest vocalists (Rick Alteizer and Robyn Dawn) were brought aboard to complete two of the pieces while I was on hiatus from the band performing disaster research and working on the Washington State Nursing Commission. I finished the remaining songs upon my return. The upcoming work is a tremendous musical departure from the ‘safer’ water we swam in our earlier compositions, and represents Ajalon’s movement into the more challenging and adventurous deeps of musical creativity. The maturation of our music, I think, will be quite evident, and provides a rich taste of things to come.

Randy: Well, what can I say... it’s not like anything you have heard from us before. I think the trademark sound will be unmistakable but the intensity of the music is far more aggressive and complex than we have previously done. The drumming by Dan Lile is simply over the edge and quite spectacular. It wasn’t intended to be a concept album... but there is an underlying concept at work in it. We had a couple guest players contribute. “Abstract Malady” has Paul Bielatorowicz (Carl Palmer, Neal Morse) on guitar doing some incredible amazing stuff. Also Fred Schendal (Glass Hammer) adds some wonderful keyboard motifs as well. Of course on that particular song they are mish mashed in with my keyboard and guitar parts so it could be difficult to distinguish who did what. Although the insane guitar parts by Paul will be obvious. Some of my cohorts from Parallels (Seattle Yes tribute) also added some bits.

Well thanks for your time. Do you have any final words?

Randy: We appreciate all the support we have received over the years from our fans and we hope this new album will merely be the start of a new chapter for Ajalon. We hope to play out live but clearly that will depend on how well the album does here and abroad. Also be sure and check Wil and me out in the Yes tribute from Seattle Parallels - The Music of Yes. [myspace.com/parallelsthemusicofyes]

Wil: Thank you for graciously providing your time and efforts for this interview. Ajalon wishes to thank all of our fans – and our families – who have patiently remained with us for all these years. Keep the faith and, as we go through the trials ahead, hold fast!





MORTIFICATION

Showing the Way out...

BY KEVEN CROTHERS

THIS PAST JUNE, METAL MASHERS MORTIFICATION RELEASED ANOTHER FINE OFFERING – *THE EVIL ADDICTION DESTROYING MACHINE*. FANS SHOULD BE REJOICING LOUDLY AS NOT MANY CHRISTIAN METAL BANDS HAVE ACHIEVED THE TYPE OF LONGEVITY, WITH FAIRLY REGULAR RELEASES, AS MORTIFICATION. EVEN WHEN STEVE ROWE WENT THROUGH HIS NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE WITH CANCER THE BAND'S OUTPUT WAS SEEMINGLY UNAFFECTED. THAT REVEALS TO ME A TRUE DESIRE TO CONTINUALLY PUT OUT QUALITY MUSIC FOR THEIR FANS, BUT ALSO NEW MUSIC THAT CAN BE USED AS A TOOL TO INTRODUCE NON-BELIEVERS TO CHRISTIANITY.

When interviewing Steve for this article we covered a lot of ground. When I asked how the album has been received Steve said, "All of our releases since *Post Momentary Affliction* (1993) have received mixed reactions. People seem to really love each release or really hate them. Not a lot of middle ground reaction, very black and white. But those who really love Mortification are really loving this album." When we discussed whether he was surprised by this kind of reception Steve simply said, "No."

Frankly, I'm excited that Mortification continues to expand their sound while yet staying true to their heavy metal roots. You're never gonna confuse Mortification for Stryper. Steve explained to me, "Each new Mortification album has a fresh approach. The new album fits perfectly because no two Mortification albums from all 14 sound the same.

They are ALL unique, different and recognizable in their own right. The new album came out EXACTLY as planned. I wrote all the music and lyrics for these songs." Throughout their career Steve has been the rudder to steer the ship, such determination is rare.

We see a creative spark and also attention to detail that demands getting it right. When we spoke of a favorite track he had this to say: "Playing-wise, probably the title track. I spent 3 years writing and re-writing the songs. I wanted *The Evil Addiction Destroying Machine* to be a great opening song for this album and also for playing live. So it needed to be very playable live and present a good cross section of where this album sits musically." I really believe that speaks to the man's dedication of getting his craft right. It is also a dedication to the fans and to the God



“All of our releases since Post Mortem Affliction have received mixed reactions. People seem to really love each release or really hate them.”

he serves. Who else are we aware of that has spent three years creating a new piece of musical whimsy. That type of work is not common. I'm sure there are better bass players and better vocalists, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but this type of ethic speaks to a dedication that is rarely matched.

We continued our discussion about the new record ... oh I'm sorry I mean CD or MP3's?? (Aren't you glad I didn't mention reel to reel or 8-track!!!) Moving on back to our discussion, I asked if Mortification had tried anything different on this release. "We used a high profile studio with professional engineer and producer. Musically, I wanted the release to sound VERY up. I like happy metal; I'm not a fan of black metal and dark progressions. I really chased happy rhythms and nice melodies in the guitar and bass lines. I am a BIG fan of happy metal music, such as Anthrax, D.R.I., Tankard, Sodom and Iron Maiden." That, to this writer, is quite a cross section of influences; however I must admit I myself am extremely enthusiastic Iron Maiden fan, so that I raise my hands and cheer!

Onward our discussion continued, this time venturing to the topic of the current members of Mortification. To that end Steve offers this bit of insight: "Mick Jelinic has been in Mortification now for well over seven years and is the longest serving guitarist in the band's history. Adam Zaffarese was in Mort from 2000 to 2002 and played on *The Silver Cord Is Severed* and *Relentless* during that time. Adam rejoined with Mick and me to record the new album. Lincoln Bowen, however, is now the guitarist in my solo rock band Wonrowe Vision." More about that later!

As our conversation continued we started to dive into the inspiration behind the lyrics of the title track. "The title track is a comparison between street drug and medical drug addiction. I was a medical drug addict. After 18 months of pethidine and morphine, hospital grade heroin to kill serious pain, I was well and truly a medical drug addict. I went from 67kg to 41kg. In U.S. terms, 145 pounds to 93 pounds approximately." (WOW!) Steve continues, "Coming off pethidine and morphine I went through 2 weeks of withdrawal. The second week took me within two hours of death for the second time. The pain killers were masking the second bout of spinal fluid cancer." He goes on, "I should have been informed more about the dangers of medical drug addiction. But I was about as seriously ill as a human being can get without dying. However, I am still on some medication that is impossible to get off without dying. The title song is about forgiving a 'possible' hospital /drug

company conspiracy and for the street addicts to get clean and forgive themselves. I am a long term cancer survivor and very grateful to be alive to see my son grow up. My wife Kate and I have been married twenty years this December (2009). She has been a huge blessing standing by me all the way! It was Kate's godly wisdom that got us through it all!"

We then moved on to discuss their arrangement with Soundmass. "Soundmass are an Australian company. The owner, Adam, I've known for years. I met him when he was running a metal radio program. He is the most honest Christian business person I have ever worked with. That's the main reason I am still making music. In 2004, Adam took over all of my online distribution and just pays me a percentage every month. He does everything and online sales are worldwide. Adam also has wholesale distribution into the thriving European secular metal market." He continues, "About eight years ago he started the company. Currently Adam runs Soundmass from Britain. He has an employee here in Melbourne who does all the physical freight, postage of the wholesale and retail orders."

We then briefly discussed his new side project. "The band is called Wonrowe Vision. It is something I have wanted to do for many years. Lincoln Bowen will be playing guitar and Andrew Esnouf will handle the drumming duties. So far I've written eight songs. Wonrowe Vision is heavy punk edge rock 'n' roll with catchy rock riffs and lyrics with appeal to rock fans of all ages – high energy rock 'n' roll with plenty of passion. We plan to record the debut album early in 2010. Blessings to all *Heaven's Metal* supporters!"

In closing, Steve indicated to me that Mort will go on forever! Continue to pray for Steve as his medical issues are many. How the man does it is beyond me. He and Mick will record another album in two or three years time. In the mean time, do yourself a favor and pick up their new aural assault, *The Evil Addiction Destroying Machine*.

HEAVEN'S
METAL

ALBUM REVIEWS



BRIDE TSAR BOMBA

The hype says this is the last recording from rock/metal stalwarts Bride. That being the case, they're going out in fine fashion. *Tsar Bomba*, as I listen to it, blends the new and the old in a wonderful package. Opening with the industrial metal feel of "Industrial Christ," they bring the freight home and album closer "We Are the People" is driving rock n roll. The metal assault of "Never," "Last Thing I Feel," and "Nothing Means Anything to Me" is infectious. The final three songs on this album simply smoke. Driving rock n roll with ENERGY, PASSION and DRIVE. The Thompson brothers wrote the material; however, the entire band gets the credit in the arranging department. I believe that is what pushed this material to its limit. Bride, if this is indeed the last bit of music you bring to us, it is exceptional. Everyone has hot wheels... [Retroactive] Keven Crothers



DESYRE WARNING OF THE NIGHT

Long live GLAM METAL!! Big hair, bright outfits, upbeat rocking metal is the flag waved ever so proudly by Desyre from Finland. The music has the hooks, the production is better than average, the musicianship is solid. The only weakness is the vocal department; the vocal delivery lacks the energy or power to bring these tunes to life, and at times is "pitchy." Even with that, I enjoyed this CD and many of the songs stuck in my mind. [Glam Nation] Jeff McCormack



EDGEND A NEW IDENTITY

A great mix of Dream Theater, Symphony X and Amaseffer, Israel's Edgend – with this debut release – is set to "light up" the progressive metal world. While they lack the "originality" factor (sounding a bit too much like a less neo-classical version of Symphony X), and while not as innovative or as ethnically influenced as their fellow countrymen Amaseffer, the songs, the skills and the production are stout. Along with the new Narnia and Futures End, this is one of the best CDs from Nightmare in some time. [Nightmare] Jonathan Swank



MEGADETH ENDGAME

The new album opens with a tasty instrumental showcasing Mustaine and Chris Broderick (Jag Panzer) trading solos and suddenly you realize this is the most potent Megadeth lineup since *Rust in Peace*. The late '90s slump long forgotten, Mustaine is back to the hard hitting thrash that made Megadeth one of the Big Four. Songs like "This Day We Fight" and "Headcrusher" strike with speed metal fury, then Dave shows us his tender side with "The Hardest Part of Letting Go... Sealed With A Kiss." Megadeth's message this time around is primarily political, as evidenced by the title track, and less spiritual in nature; however Dave's take weighs heavily on the paranoid (as usual), so he plays the doomsday prophet well. My favorite tune is the closer "The Right to Go Insane," where we're treated to a little working man's blues. [Roadrunner] Chris Gatto



FUTURES END MEMOIRS OF A BROKEN MAN

This northern Californian power/prog band – newly signed to Nightmare – has crafted a concept metal epic that will make even fans of Maiden smile. Fred Marshall (who once sang with Zero Hour) tackles the all important soaring melodic vocals – his voice a much better fit here compared to the technical metal of ZH. The key to the brilliance – in addition to solid songwriting – is the "walls of guitars" dual attack of Christian Wentz and Marc Pattison. Ex-Testament members Jon Allen (drums) and Steve DiGiorgio (bass) round out the rhythm section, but thrash this is not. In the spirit of Savatage, the story vividly portrays the struggles of a 4-year war veteran to overcome depression, addiction, guilt and doubt in order to regain his faith and hope. Warning: the "libretto" contains some rough language/cussing which is not present in the lyrics. [Nightmare] Jonathan Swank



NARNIA COURSE OF A GENERATION

Narnia with a new singer? How will that sound? Well, I will say ... AMAZING! This album sounds different in many respects from previous releases, and not just vocally. There is more grit and aggressiveness

musically, complimenting the new vocalist, which while still melodic, is a bit more brash, metallic and powerful in nature. Changing lead singers can break a band's following, but Narnia has bounced back in a new and powerful way, sure to please all fans of melodic euro-metal. [Nightmare] Jeff McCormack



ULTIMATIUM LEX METALIS

Metal cover albums let a band and their audience share their mutual love for heavy metal. The songs are not meant to be spot-on renditions, but tributes to the classics as filtered through the band playing them – sometimes in a different style entirely. This is a very fun collection of metal classics, off the beaten path (that is to say – beyond run of the mill tuneage) that sounds very little like the originals (with the exception of Saxon's "Denim and Leather") and very much like NM thrash masters Ultimatium. Vengeance Rising's "Can't Get Out" has always been a favorite of mine and Quiet Riot and Twisted Sister in full thrash mode are a riot. Two fists up for Metallica, Priest, Maiden, Motorhead, and Metal Church, as well. How 'bout another round? The "Law of Metal" deserves a second chapter. [Retroactive] Chris Gatto



FUTURE ISTOMORROW FIT TO DIE (PART 1)

The Italian prog metal scene just continues to blossom, with excellent releases from Pathosray and Mind Key already out this year on Frontier Records. These guys have a similar style and sound to their fellow countrymen – high quality songwriting with melodic vocals – but in addition, FIT has incorporated an all male choir right into the mix (without the over orchestration) giving this, the first installment of a "requiem," an expansive sound. Self-produced, the sound is really good – reminding me a bit of the Souljourners debut – but the lead vocalist is hard to understand and his tone and accent detracts just a bit from the overall heavy vibe this band generates. FIT = solid, edifying prog metal worth checking out for fans of the genre. [Indie] Jonathan Swank

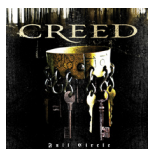


OH, SLEEPER

SON OF THE MORNING

A solid debut followed by relentless touring established Oh, Sleeper as a promising new band, but album #2 has upped the ante considerably.

With an ominous emasculated pentagram on the cover and the title *Son of the Morning*, this concept album focuses on the rise and fall of that slimy serpent we all know. Vocalist Micah sings and screams his way through this metalcore apocalyptic, first as the devil in first person, praising his own vain follies – all the way to the glorious end when it's The Finisher's voice we hear (ironically in the same musical style) as the Lamb cuts off the goat's horns (the ominous symbol now explained). I just can't get enough of that story. Great stuff. [Solid State] Chris Gatto



CREED

FULL CIRCLE

Creed has got their muscle, their metal and most of their swagger back. The only thing missing here is lasting

songs – songs like those epic masterpieces we heard on *Human Clay* (and missed on *Weathered*), like "Faceless Man," "What If" and even the overplayed "Arms Wide Open." Solid, heavy, rather good music and vocals. But I'm not sure I'll remember this one next year. [Wind-Up] Doug Van Pelt

AUSTRIAN DEATH MACHINE

DOUBLE BRUTAL

Tim Lambesis and Ahhnold (ah, yeah all of them) are back with a few more friends (including Buz McGrath, Rocky Gray and the talented ex-Outworld's Rusty Cooley on lead guitar) this time around with two discs full of laughable metal carnage. Disc 1 is the "all original" set, while disc 2 contains covers from Judas Priest, Megadeth, Metallica and Motorhead (plus "so much more"). While the skits remain stupidly hilarious, the "guests" on this one up the ante in terms of song quality. Still, Lambesis (much to Ahhnold's chagrin) continues the theme of not taking himself too seriously – "Who Told You You Could Eat My Cookies" the perfect spoof of both Ahhnold and metal itself. Highlights include "I Need Your Clothes, Your Boots, And Your Motorcycle" from *T2*, the *T2* theme (Yes!!!) and the cover of Judas Priest's "Hell Bent For Leather." [Metal Blade] Jonathan Swank



NORTHERN ASH

PATTERNS OF DECAY

Northern Ash is a two man black metal/ grind project by Felipe Diez and Todd Brandt. My expectations for these "home projects" tend

to be rather low, as they often turn out rather low-fi, but this was better than anticipated. "Carnivores in the Cathedral" and the title track are catchy, while some of the rest is just listenable, without being earth shattering. Along with the six songs are two unreleased demos from Northern Ash in 2008 – showing how far the band has come along. Also included are two bonus demos that appear to be from a different band, Entom. These are borderline terrible, as the black metal is bogged down with a slow, plodding doomy sound. Limited release of 250. [Sullen] Chris Gatto

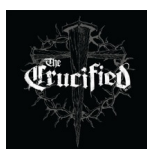


MELIAH RAGE

MASQUERADE

One of the many '80s thrash metal bands that never achieved the stardom of the Big Four, Boston's Meliah Rage soldiered

on and continued putting out quality music, albeit with a different singer in the new millennium. The new release *Masquerade* reunites the band with original singer Mike Munro and the result is a return to the classic thrash sound with Big Mike's gruff vocals reminiscent of James Hetfield. The real surprise is the lyrics. Meliah Rage is not a Christian band, but the lyrics this time around are entirely faith based, thanks to one Mike Munro. If you think we should get off our duffs and interview the band to find out why, fill up the editor's mailbag this month. Special guest vocals on "Last Rites" by Ronnie Munroe (Metal Church). [SFW/Metro City Records] Chris Gatto



THE CRUCIFIED

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

Fans old and new now have the opportunity to hear The Crucified's entire recorded history. A jam-packed collection of two CDs plus one DVD of handcam video. This is truly an awesome collection of all things Crucified. *Pillars of Humanity* received a remix that enhances the sound without losing any intensity. Two songs for an aborted third album appear here, which just "bring it!" This fantastic collection is for those who enjoy their music fast and heavy. [Tooth & Nail] Keven Crothers



GRAVE ROBBER

INNER SANCTUM

Whoah Oh, Oh... Horror punk enthusiasts will be thrilled with this new collection of songs from the creepy, Misfits-influenced quartet from Indiana. While the style doesn't deviate much from *Be Afraid*, the songs are better "executed" and more diverse. "Valley Of Dry Bones" – one of the strongest songs lyrically – actually has a straight up rock 'n' roll vibe. And is that Elvis – back from the grave – pining away on "Tell Tale Heart?" Post mortem analysis: despite all the gore and "ghoulish" imagery, the emphasis remains – good overcomes evil ... these guys just make it sound fun. [Retroactive] Jonathan Swank

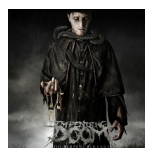


AJALON

THIS GOOD PLACE

Progressive rocker Randy George and company are back with perhaps their best release ever. Okay, when the music

quality bar is set this high, that fact is probably irrelevant – this talented group of musicians play a brand of lush, melodic and mesmerizing rock that you either love or hate. But it's the story within the lyrics that really takes the band to the next level. In grandiose Paul O'Neill (Savatage/TSO) fashion, this redemption story is wonderfully and colorfully told. "Not Man" – a highlight track – musically and lyrically portrays a miserable, unreconciled sinner about as perfectly as anything I've heard. For fans of Neal Morse, Kerry Livgren, Spock's Beard and the like. [Progrock] Jonathan Swank



IMPENDING DOOM

THE SERPENT SERVANT

This release took me several listens to get my mind around. ID hit the scene hard a couple years ago, injecting some much-needed adrenalized creativity into the rapidly stagnating deathcore scene. *The Serpent Servant* is certainly not *Nailed, Dead, Risen*. It focuses more on repetitive riffs than sheer brutality. And although it took me longer to get into, it's been a worthwhile pursuit – just don't expect ID to be repeating the same formula. Strengths this time include solid songwriting and punchy rhythms, while the repetitive riffs might be a turn-off for those wanting speed/speed/speed. [Facedown] Loyd Harp

PASTOR BOB'S INTERNATIONAL REPORT

By Pastor Bob

As I write this, I am in the middle of and extended European speaking tour. I started with teaching in Denmark. We had a great turnout with Sanctuary Denmark, followed by a great concert with Danish bands and AntiDemon. Destruction Fest was next in London. The Church Of The Glorious Undead puts on a great festival there. It was great to have AntiDemon again, along with A Hill To Die Upon, Solace The Day and BloodWork. I am currently in Oslo, Norway. Sitting around me as I am writing this are the Crucified. They will be playing here – along with BTA, AntiDemon, Drokknor, A Hill to Die Upon, Narnia, and many others. Next week, I will continue my tour and speak at the 20th anniversary of the MeltDown Festival in Birmingham, England. Jim LaVerde and Michael Bloodgood will join me there to speak with me. Then, it's off to Switzerland for three weeks with the great people there, and then to our very first festival in Portugal called "Rock On Christ(mas)". It is amazing to me just how many doors continue to open up for metal music, as you will see in the article here. India! Who ever thought we would be doing festivals in India! Remember to pray for these great ministries. [pastorbobbeeman.com]



India, Puerto Rico, South Africa & metal

Vincent Jebaraj, William Pegan & Ryan Straarup



Vincent Jebaraj – India

It's my joy and privilege to meet you in this fashion. I am Pastor Vincent from Chennai. Me and my wife Ramya Vincent are pastoring a youth church called Intouch Fellowship International in Chennai. Our primary focus is on the younger generation of today. We believe that the younger generation of today's world have tremendous

capacity to make tomorrow's world. I have instructed our church young people that we will not fish among Christians. We will fish only among non-Christians. We want other religious people to embrace Jesus as their saviour. There are lots of musicians who play secular music, so much addicted to drugs and alcohol, and one of our desires is to catch those youngsters and make them disciples of Christ. If I don't have a common ground no way are they going to even talk to me having given the license, me being a bass guitarist. So we wanted the young rock and roll musicians and the youngsters to see Christ. If you ask me if I have opposition, yes I do ... not from non-Christians, but from Christians. God gave me a burden to start a neutral event where I can invite my non-Christian friends to come and take part in it. So I threw this idea among our church young people and I put one brother as responsible to take care of it. We named it as "Party House." It happens every month – 3rd Saturday. We call some bands and ask them to play gospel/secular songs. This helps us to invite non-Christian friends for this event and we start developing a relationship with them. At times we only play games and during the event we don't talk anything about Gospel. But during the course of building our relationship, we share the Gospel. Right now two guys have accepted Christ and got baptized as well. They are hardcore for Christ. God delivered them from all bad habits as well. Two more are on the process. Any part of the day if our phone rings we are there to encourage and motivate the youngsters. We believe in loving them just as they are. Having this in mind we invited Pastor Bob to come and minister, but owing to health conditions he is not able to make it. So Pastor Nar (another excited man of God) is coming and our youngsters in our church and branch churches are so thrilled to receive this man of God. We believe Pastor Nar coming here would be a blessing to all

here. Pastor Nar is coming in the month of Feb 2010. Please pray for this mega event. For further details you can contact me at +91-9840996134 or mail me at vincy@minister.com. God Bless! In His Service, Vincent



William Pegan – Puerto Rico

The big news from Puerto Rico was the Ultimate Sacrifice Concert, featuring Pacto De Sangre (Blood Covenant), Viento Recio (Strong Wind) and a band from the church where the event took place. The show started with the band from the church then played Viento Recio, and then came the headliners of the show, Pacto De Sangre. It was one of the best performances the band played. They played both in Spanish and English. But the biggest thing that happened at the show was that 10 people gave their lives to God when the band and the Pastor from the Church made the call. The event took place at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Dorado, Puerto Rico. The Christian metal scene here in P.R. is not too big as in other places like Brazil. Bands from P.R. include Pacto De Sangre (Blood Covenant), After Omega, Filacteria, Kingdom At War, and Cronicas. Thanks and God bless you.



Ryan Straarup – South Africa

Over the last year or so South Africa has been swept by two of the most popular bands in the hardcore/metalcore scene in our day. In September 2008 South Africa hosted Underoath, which was CRAZY!! The hype was almost unbearable, as people arrived from 7 o'clock in the morning, even though the concert started at 3 in the afternoon. Where about 14 metal bands opened, by 10 o'clock the final opening band got off. Screams pierced through the crowd as Underoath took stage. Moshing from start to finish made the concert seem 10 minutes compared to a full hour. Haste the Day got the chance of sweeping through South Africa in May 2009, which promised a brutal

tour where over 15 bands in total opened all over SA. Simply AMAZING!! The varsity town of Pietermaritzburg (Pmb) has hosted small festivals in our local alternative clubs such as The Red Door or Detour. The Red Door has hosted some awesome secular metal festivals such as From The Dark Metal Fest, with bands such as Theatre Runs Red, Deny The Empire and Contrast The Water. I have a friend who plays guitar for Deny The Empire, so I had to check them live and they were nothing short of amazing (Arch Enemy influence). I have to say that Theatre Runs Red took the cake musically. Having a female vocalist that sounded like Brook Reeves from Impending Doom, they did blackened death metal that made the crowd crazy, sending chills up spines with the eerie sounds that came out those speakers. Christian festival Hallowed Fest took place at Detour and boomed with excitement when some of our local bands came together and opened for a hardcore band known as Crossing Point. Revive Fest was yet another festival held at Detour Pub. People came to the concerts and left exhausted from all the energy tossed around on the floor. The club owners realized they were making zero cash from the bar, yet more from the Christian hardcore kids coming to check the bands out and having a great time. It was funny to see a bunch of kids flood a pub, yet not purchase alcohol at all. We had no idea what these festivals were building up to; most of the bands were from local churches such as Hilton Baptist, Grace Fellowship, and New Covenant Fellowship (NCF Church). Hilton Baptist started organizing what is yet to become Pmb's biggest Christian festivals of the year ranging from bands across South Africa such as New Altum, Truth Revealed, Show & Tell and many more. Arise Fest will be taking place over the New Year, kicking off 2010 with moshing, headbanging, screaming for our Savior, and of course FOOD!! Before the New Year we are also looking forward to our 'mini arise fest' which NCF Church will be hosting as we advertise for Arise Fest. We pray that we can impact the metal community more with these two upcoming events, and our heart is to show Christ's love and to love people for who they are. We are praying to get more involved with the bands in Red Door but unfortunately no Christian Bands are allowed ... that just makes our journey more exciting as the Bible says we will be persecuted but we will continue to stand firm in Christ. Thank you all for your prayers and support into the Christian metal community.

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after being compressed, stretched or unexpectedly tested. Life is never easy and often we face major falls in life from which we need to get up. Resilience requires believing you can make it, asking God for help and working very hard. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for God and not for men."

I have a close friend named Dave. Unlike me, Dave has a very high IQ. But similarly to me, he picked a life vocation that he really had to work at to achieve. Like me with music, when Dave said he was going to be a career architect he was compressed. His teachers at high school suggested that drawing was not his strong point – especially technical drawing. But Dave had a vision and was sticking to it.

Even with good high school marks Dave was not accepted into university to study architecture because his drawing skills were not at a high level. However, Dave was accepted into a technical college to study drafting. Being a draftsman has much less prestige than being an architect and involves a high level of technical drawing ability! Dave practiced his technical drawing day and night, never losing hold of his vision to one day be a fully qualified architect. After Dave's drafting course he

was employed as a draftsman. However, after multiple applications to many universities was still not accepted to study architecture in the evenings. Without losing his vision, Dave applied to study computer technical drawing at the technical college he had just graduated from. This was in the mid '90s. When Dave began his dream it was in the '80s before computer art was used. Dave has always dedicated his vision to God, wanting to use his dream to help those less fortunate. Following the successful completion of the computer technical drawing course in the evenings, while working during the day as a draftsman, Dave was accepted into university to study architecture at the age of 30! At the age of 35, 17 years after finishing high school, Dave became a fully qualified architect.

While working for a firm, Dave would take one month a year without pay to travel at his own expense to Nepal to design city infrastructure. This is a mission called Architects Without Frontiers. So impressed with Dave's work ethic and self sacrifice an opposition architectural firm offered Dave a massive pay increase including full pay and assistance with his mission's work in Nepal. Dave never lost his vision and God was with him, working against the negatives. Resilience takes vision, guts, perseverance and very hard work.



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The Road Blog

"Because heavy metal is an interactive sport"

by Chris Gatto

Binghamton Area Metalfest

9/12/09 – Endicott, NY

I made a long road trip up to NY to see **Cage** for the first time on the east coast. Lots of cool bands worth mentioning – Titanium Black, with singer replete in a leather kilt; Sinner, a Judas Priest tribute band; Ravage, Boston area power metal / thrash band; Machines of Grace, the new AOR / hard rock band of Savatage alums Zakk Stevens and Jeff Plate; and The Rods, a 3-piece American band from the early '80s formed around the guitarist from Elf (Dio's old band). Of course, I came to see Cage, who had just played Prog Power Fest the night before. They remembered me well from the *Heaven's Metal* interview with them a couple years ago and really tore up the stage. Probably one of the best American examples of power metal out there now. I had a great time and got to shout in the mic for "I Am the King." During the band's performance, steam was pouring off singer **Sean's** bald head, which prompted the audience to start calling him "Hey, Steam Head!" and "Ghostrider!" They say a party isn't a party until the cops come, and they did, responding to a noise complaint (imagine that!) The officers enjoyed Cage so much that they sat out in their cars and enjoyed the show for quite some time before reluctantly ending the festivities.

Stryper

9/20/09 – Allentown, PA

See that review on page 6...

Believer

9/25/09 – Allentown, PA

The new album by Believer, *Gabriel* proved that the boys still had that innovative creative power within them and this show was special, as it was their first in 16 years. The band still commands a lot of respect in the thrash and speed metal world. Believer put on a great show, albeit late (they started at 12:30). I think they played the entire new album and one old song. The new lineup is quite effective and it was cool to see them do all the sound effects live and enjoying themselves immensely. Quite a bizarre band like no other. They were selling a special breast cancer shirt with proceeds going to cancer research (that's Dr. Kurt Bachman's field). This was the first of a bunch of shows they're doing, but all pretty much in the Philly area.

Iron and Steel Festival

10/17/09 – Vineland, NJ

Another road trip and lots of great bands and way too few fans. Anyway, I saw some great bands that I had seen before, namely Ravage (thrash from Boston on Metal Blade), Arctic Flame (NJ power metal purists on some German label), and Krank (Retrospect recording artist whose only album from 1986 has just been remastered and reissued – great band with a WASP sound, raunchy mohawked singer drinks his onstage beverages out of a gas can!) The 2 Christian bands on the billing were **Faith Factor** (singer **Ski** actually runs True Metal America now, which is like a concert promoting co-op for traditional metal bands) and **Kreyson**. Faith Factor puts on a classy operatic power metal show and you can see why they were invited to Keep It True Festival last year. I've gotten used to Ski's costume changes, but was surprised to see him come out with chain mail, helmet, and sword towards the end. I was eager to see Kreyson, as this was their first performance in the US (if I understood them right). I welcomed the band, but found conversation to be very limited due to language barriers. This Eastern European metal band have been pounding out great music for 20 years now, but have remained somewhat underground in the US so far. The band brought a couple diehard fans from home along for the show. Their set was great, reminded me a lot of older Jerusalem, if a little heavier, but it was performed entirely in Czech, even the between-song banter. In fact, the only English spoken at all was, "Thank you and God bless." Strange as the whole album that Retroactive just put out is in English. I could tell I was hearing the same songs, just not in English. Odd, as we Americans love hearing our own language, but still loved it. Thankfully, the headbangers in attendance gave a lot of respect to this well-deserving band. The headliner was Ross the Boss, which was a real treat. Their new album is actually better than Manowar's recent work, less pretentious, and has a broader metal appeal. Their set of fiery axework and German led vocals tied Manowar with the loudest decibel shows I have ever seen.

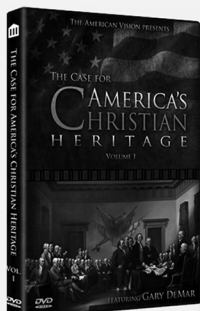
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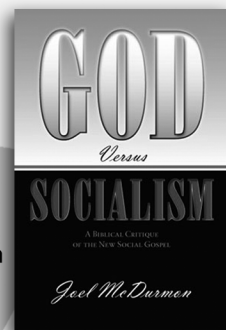


The Case for America's Christian Heritage (Vol 1)

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God versus Socialism - Joel McDurmon

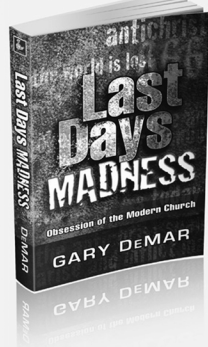
A Biblical Critique of the New Social Gospel: God owns everything. That is the biblical view. The biblical witness is clear: God believes in private property, and He not only desires us but commands us to live by that rule as well. Socialism is the belief that private property is a bad idea. Socialists believe that governments should own most or all property and distribute it as government experts, scientists, politicians, or occasionally voters see fit. Under socialism, the State puts itself in the place of God and says, "The earth is the State's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." Between these two systems—private property and socialism—there exists fundamental conflict. They are fundamental rival religious systems. Choosing one, you reject the other. Either God commands and judges man, or man commands and judges man. This book illustrates this war of worldviews in the economic and political realm, and argues the necessity and superiority of choosing God over humanism's false god, socialism, in all its many forms. 245 pages. - Paperback



Last Days Madness - Gary DeMar

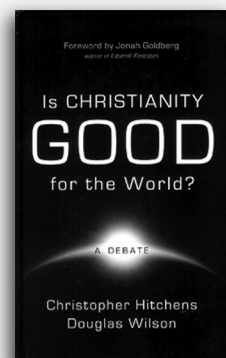
"The end is near!" "We're the rapture generation!" "Jesus is coming soon!" How many times have we heard phrases like these? How many books have you seen promising to give you the inside track on the identity of the antichrist? how many times have you been told that "the antichrist is alive somewhere in the world today?" how many of today's world leaders can you list who have been given the dreaded number 666? Tens of millions of Christians, at one time or another, have been caught up in the frenzy of last days madness - the belief that all Bible prophecy is being fulfilled in this generation. But there's nothing new in any of this. Bible teachers have been predicting the end times and the identity of the antichrist for centuries. And all these "prophets" have had one thing in common - they've all been wrong.

Last Days Madness explores the methodology of today's "prophecy experts," and challenges the world of hype and hysteria regarding prophetic events. Dozens of topics are covered: Wars and rumors of wars; Famines; Earthquakes; The rebuilding of the temple; The number of the Beast; The identity of the antichrist; The battle of Armageddon; The place of Europe and Russia in prophecy. 443 pages. - Paperback



Is Christianity Good for the World? Douglas Wilson vs Christopher Hitchens

The gloves come off in this electric exchange, originally hosted by Christianity Today, as leading atheist Christopher Hitchens (author of God Is Not Great) and Christian apologist Douglas Wilson (author of Letter from a Christian Citizen) go head-to-head on this divisive question. The result is entertaining and provocative — a glimpse into the ongoing debate. 72 pages. - Hardback



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